

AN 5.140
Sota Sutta
“Attentive Listener”
Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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Bhikkhus, by possessing these five things, the king’s bull elephant becomes worthy, suitable, and fit to be in the king’s royal services, proudly considered as a symbol of kingship. What are these five?

Here, Bhikkhus, the king’s bull elephant listens attentively; he is a destroyer; he is a protector; he patiently endures and is one who courageously marches forward.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the king’s elephant listen attentively?

Here, Bhikkhus, the king’s bull elephant calls to mind whatever the elephant trainer has trained him to do; whether that training was given earlier or not, the king’s bull elephant listens carefully and attentively, heeding it, directing his mind to what was said, as he recalls everything. In this manner, the king’s bull elephant listens attentively.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the king’s bull elephant become a destroyer?

Here, Bhikkhus, when the king’s bull elephant has gone to the battlefield, he destroys the enemy’s elephants, their riders, horses, riders on horses, battle chariots, and their charioteers, along with the foot soldiers. In this manner, the king’s bull elephant is a destroyer.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the king’s bull elephant become a protector?

Here, Bhikkhus, when the king’s bull elephant has gone to the battlefield, he protects the front part of his body, the hind part of his body, his front legs, his hind legs, his head, his ears, his tusks, his trunk, his tail, *and* the rider on his back. In this manner, the king’s bull elephant is a protector.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the king’s bull elephant patiently endure?

Here, Bhikkhus, when the king’s bull elephant has gone to the battlefield, he endures blows from long spears, swords, arrows, and thrown axes; he endures the sounds of large deafening drums and conches, and the pouring of heated liquids. In this manner, the king’s bull elephant patiently endures.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the king’s bull elephant courageously march forward?

Here, Bhikkhus, in whatever direction the elephant trainer sends him, the king’s bull elephant goes in the direction or region his trainer sends him to, whether having gone there before or not,

he goes in the direction and region and does so quietly. In this manner, the king's bull elephant courageously marches forward.

Therefore, by possessing these five things, the king's bull elephant becomes worthy, suitable, and fit to be in the king's royal services, proudly considered as a symbol of kingship.

In the same manner, Bhikkhus, by possessing these five traits, a Bhikkhu becomes worthy of gifts, deserving of offerings, qualified to receive hospitality, well-suited to receive reverential salutations with one's palms at the heart, and fit to be called the "unsurpassed field of merits for the world." What are these five?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu listens attentively; he is a destroyer; he is a protector; he patiently endures; and is one who courageously marches forward.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the Bhikkhu listen attentively?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu recalls whatever teaching he has heard in the Dhamma and Discipline as taught by the Tathāgata, while he carefully and attentively listens to the Dhamma, heeding it, and directing his mind to what was said, as he recalls everything. In this manner, the Bhikkhu listens attentively.

And how Bhikkhus, does the Bhikkhu become a destroyer?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu does not entertain nor hold on to any arisen sensual thoughts, and instead he quickly removes his attention from them, as he dispels and destroys them by not allowing them to arise again.

Also, the Bhikkhu does not entertain nor hold on to any arisen angry thoughts, and instead he quickly removes his attention from them, as he dispels and destroys them by not allowing them to arise again.

Further, the Bhikkhu does not entertain nor hold on to any arisen harmful thoughts, and instead he quickly removes his attention from them, as he dispels and destroys them by not allowing them to arise again.

Further, the Bhikkhu does not entertain nor hold on to any arisen evil thoughts, and instead he quickly removes his attention from them, as he dispels and destroys them by not allowing them to arise again. In this manner, the Bhikkhu becomes a destroyer.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the Bhikkhu become a protector?

Here, Bhikkhus, whenever the Bhikkhu happens to see a visible object with his eyes, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his eye faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint.

Similarly, whenever he happens to hear an audible sound with his ears, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his ear faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint.

Similarly, whenever he happens to smell an odor with his nose, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his nose faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint.

Similarly, whenever he happens to taste a flavor with his tongue, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his tongue faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint.

Similarly, whenever he happens to touch a tactile object with his body, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his body faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint.

And similarly, whenever he happens to think about a cognizable thought or memory with his mind, he does not allow himself to get pulled into nor grab onto its details or specific features, for he knows perfectly well, that if he were to leave his mind faculty uncontrolled, then vile and dreadful unwholesome states of mind of longing and sorrow would soon overwhelm him, and because of this clear understanding, the Bhikkhu practices restraint. In this manner, the Bhikkhu becomes a protector.

And how, Bhikkhus, does the Bhikkhu patiently endure?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu patiently endures the cold, heat, hunger, thirst, the sting of yellow flies, mosquitoes, gadflies, creeping things, the wind, and the scorching sun, as well as withstanding the painful feelings resulting from derogatory and harsh words spoken to him. He also patiently bears the arisen painful bodily feelings that are sharp, excruciating, and difficult to face, and that drain one of physical vitality, causing life to end. In this manner, the Bhikkhu is one who patiently endures.

And how Bhikkhus, is the Bhikkhu one who courageously marches forward?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu quickly goes in whatever direction or region, which he had never gone to before, even though having traversed in vast existences throughout the beginning-less time. Thus, he traverses into the uncharted territories of stilling all mental conjurings, the giving

up and relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, and *Nibbāna*. It is in this manner that the Bhikkhu courageously marches forward.

Thus, Bhikkhus, by possessing these five traits, a Bhikkhu becomes worthy of gifts, deserving of offerings, qualified to receive hospitality, well-suited to receive reverential salutations with one's palms at the heart, and fit to be called the "unsurpassed field of merits for the world."

Sadhu

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